

**Claire Gordon:** Hello everybody and welcome to this podcast for the LSE Higher Education Blog. My name is Claire Gordon and I'm Director of the Eden Centre for Education Enhancement at the London School of Economics. And I'm delighted to welcome here today to talk about the reactive chalkface, Mary Wright who's Associate Provost, Teaching and Learning, and Executive Director of the Sheridan Centre for Teaching and Learning at Brown University, who I had the great good fortune to meet at a panel at the Reimagine Education conference a couple of years ago. And also, I'm delighted to welcome back Peter Bryant who's a former colleague at LSE, who's now the Associate Dean of Education and an Associate Professor of Business Education at the University of Sydney Business School.

Before I hand over to my colleagues to tell you a little bit more about their universities and the world in which they work, I just wanted to briefly tell you something about the origins of this podcast on the reactive chalkface. Last September, I decided to take to Twitter and express a degree of frustration, I think, about the nature of the work world that we were encountering now. And I wrote: "Covid has taken away reflective spaces and expanded the remit of what we as academics are called on to do, #thereactivechalkface." And really, that just was a spur-of-the-moment tweet, but it's given rise to a whole area of reflection and dialogue and conversation with colleagues inside our university, and across the sector about what is this reactive chalkface, and how has our work as academic developers, and as education experts, being affected by the Covid pandemic.

But before we go into more detail about that debating the meanings and the rights and wrongs of the notion of the reactive chalkface, I'd like to hand over to my colleagues to introduce themselves and tell you a little bit more about who they are and where they're coming from. So, first of all, Mary, welcome to our podcast!

**Mary Wright:** Thank you Claire. So, I'm Mary Wright, and as you noted, I work at Brown University, which is located in Providence, Rhode Island, the smallest state in the United States. Brown was formed in 1764, so before the United States. It's an Ivy league university and we have about 10,000 students, 6,700 of whom are undergraduates. The Centre in which I work is called the Sheridan Centre for Teaching and Learning. We have 35 staff, we also have six provost faculty teaching fellows, who are faculty who partner with us to do our work. And then we also employ about 500 undergraduates and graduate students to also partner with us to advance teaching and learning. So, it's a model that is often being called an integrated centre for teaching and learning, because we are bringing together digital learning, instructional development, as well as direct academic support. And so, from all of those vantage points it's been an interesting ride during the Covid-19 pandemic. So, I'll turn things over to Peter.

**Peter Bryant:** Thank you. So, as was mentioned, I work at the University of Sydney. We're Australia's oldest university formed in about 1870. We were originally created to represent the traditions of Oxford and Cambridge in Sydney and, in fact, our quadrangle was built to look exactly like a quadrangle from one of those universities with the motto, 'Whilst the stars may change, the knowledge remains the same' which is slightly colonial and slightly idiosyncratic. We have emerged to be a lot bigger than that - we are a university with about 75,000 students. And my faculty, which is the Faculty of Business has about 15,000 of those students. Around 50 or 55% of those are international, which is the significant and existential challenge that Covid has provided, considering Australia has had its borders closed to all international citizens since March 2020. So over nearly 50% of our students haven't been able to return to the campus, which does generate some substantial educational challenge, but also, not surprisingly, some substantial financial challenge as well.

**Claire Gordon:** Thank you, Peter. So maybe I'll finish off by saying something a little bit about the London School of Economics and Political Science, which, as it turns out, is the youngest child to the party being founded in 1895. At the heart of London, it's a social science faculty and it was set up to understand the causes of things with the aim of the betterment of society. But we have been interrogating which parts of that society were what were considered to be desirable for betterment in recent years, as we've been considering some of our colonial past as well. LSE has 12,000 students, roughly divided half and half between undergraduates and postgraduates, so we have a very high, relatively speaking, a very high large postgraduate community.

And the Eden Centre for Education Enhancement is also very new. We're bringing together our academic development team and our digital education team under one roof, and we thought that this would be a way of building on the synergies of the expertise of both these different teams, and we basically have five key areas of activity, I mean they're overlapping, they have many strands to them, but they relate to curriculum enrichment, academic staff development, digital education, inclusive education, and student partnership. And, just as Mary said, in all those different areas, our work has been thrown up into the air and huge demands have been placed on us, and huge opportunities opened to us over the course of the pandemic. So maybe we can now turn to this notion of the reactive chalkface, and I'll try and briefly say how I understand the notion of reactive chalkface, and then I'd like to ask you both what you think of this as a notion, does it resonate with you, do you agree, do you disagree.

So for me, I think the reactive chalk first came to mind for three different reasons: one I was reflecting on the fact that whatever role you play in the world of academic development, usually, a key aspect of our identity relates to the scholarly, evidence-based underpinnings to the work we do to applying the findings of scholarly research to trying to make education better, to put it quite simply, simplistically. And what we found in the course of the pandemic when we've been faced, like I'm sure you both have, trying to turn around a traditional, research-intensive university, which is very wedded to teaching face-to-face, mainstream programmes, with a lovely international body of students on campus, we suddenly had to switch into three mixed modes of education, and our work became, and has become, incredibly reactive and we lost that space for reflection. Another dimension of that, of this work, of this notion of the reactive chalkface, which I think really resonates with me, is the call from our colleagues for tips, for easy solutions, easy answers - 'just tell me three ways how to how to run a Zoom session.' And that kind of goes against the grain too, because we know that our colleagues, our academic colleagues across the institution, are very scholarly in the approach they take to their disciplinary research, and we also know that if they step back a bit and thought about it, they fully understand the complexities of teaching, learning, assessment, the student experience, more broadly, and yet the pressures of the pandemic, the challenges everyone was facing, was leading to an almost a dumbing down, a nullifying, if I can say that, or maybe that's a bit of an overstatement, of our expertise, and I suppose the chalkface was just a sort of a way of translating the work we do to an educational metaphor, rather than being down the mines, although I think some of us have felt like we were down the mines for a lot of the last, almost, year now.

So maybe, with that brief introduction, I could ask Mary for her thoughts on the notion of the reactive chalkface.

**Mary Wright:** Well, thank you for laying that out Claire. I think there are some pieces of it that certainly do resonate and some which, from my vantage point, I have a maybe a different perspective. So, I think that the thing that most resonates is the rapidity of the move from zero to 60 in mid-March, and in my own particular institution to give an example, in fall 2019, we had zero

online courses. There were a handful before that, and now, and last fall as well, every single course has to be offered in fully online or hybrid context, so it was quite a dramatic shift for the university and our ways of being. I think in terms of the second piece that I heard from you, in terms of the volume of the work, I think that also resonates. Certainly the Sheridan Centre staff have been facing an increased volume of work, which is a good thing, but it can also be a bad thing in terms of ... I certainly hear conversations again and again about burnout, and as a leader of the organisation that concerns me. I think the third piece that I feel have a different experience on is the call for easy answers, and so maybe I saw more of an evolution around that. So, at the end of the spring term, and at the end of the fall term, the university sent a survey to all faculty asking them essentially three questions: what went well/what was effective, why do you think it was effective, and what might you do differently. And we saw very different responses in those two time points. So at the end of the fall, when I coded the responses, the most frequent answer was what went well was a pretty fluid transition, 'I didn't have to change anything at all, I just transplanted my course to Zoom.' Then, but what I saw in the fall was a very different character of answers, where were there was a more profound, I think, rethinking, because of the time that people had over the summer to really intentionally build the course from the ground up. And so, I think a Biology faculty member talked about it best when he said, "now I realised that teaching online courses is like vegetarian cooking. You can't just take meat out and substitute tofu in; you really need to reconceptualise what that dish is like." And so, you know, sorry to extend the pun, but I do think there's a different flavour of ways that people are thinking about teaching, that again, has changed over time as they've iterated and tried and experimented new things in the classroom.

**Claire Gordon:** Thank you Mary, that's really fascinating, and I wonder if you could give us an example of the way you see people are have been re-conceptualising their thinking about teaching online, that sort of moves from a replication model to actually re-conceptualising the nature of teaching and learning in an online environment.

**Mary Wright:** Yes, well, I think, two things come to mind. One is that it frees you of time and space in interesting ways. So, we used to be rooted to, essentially, 50-minute blocks of courses, where one might give an interactive lecture in those 50 minutes. Instead, because we don't have those blocks, faculty are coming to realise if I'm teaching something that might best be served by a recorded lecture for 10 minutes, and then I can use the class time for discussion, that would be a better way to meet my core learning objectives. Also, the space piece as well, I think it's freeing for faculty to know I could be working abroad, I could be embedded in a company, I could be essentially teaching away, just like study away, teaching away, and still maintain academic continuity. Likewise, I can bring in the outside - guest speakers are much more cost-efficient to bring into classes and, so we've had some fantastic additions to Brown classes. It certainly would have been outside of our economic feasibility beforehand, so I think that's one piece, the time and space. A second piece, I think, is thinking about a new, more student-centred way of instruction. Part of that, I think, was facilitated again over the summer, where, because of some of the work that we had done at the Sheridan Centre, students were working as co-designers with faculty to really shift the roles of who was the teacher and who was the learner. And I think that has bled into the classroom as well, with some of the things that we're hearing from faculty about what works best is where it's a more student-centred form of instruction, for example, led by student presentations, or student-led breakout discussions, or even forefronting undergraduate TAs, or graduate TAs in terms of getting a perspective on what's working well.

**Claire Gordon:** Thank you, that's really helpful. Peter, over to you, what does the reactive chalkface mean to you?

**Peter Bryant:** So, with the Australian academic year being out of sync to both the European and the American ones, we started our academic year in February, with the assumption that our borders had been closed in order to prevent the virus reaching Australia, which was a forlorn hope, but that was the plan. So we started the year in a hybrid mode, where we had our international students overseas, and we were giving them the most basic opportunities to consume materials - watch, not pre-recorded lectures, but watch the lecture recordings, in the hope that after three weeks they'd be able to join us. And then, literally on the Friday afternoon of week three, we were told that everything was to go online by Monday. We had about two days to move the entire operation of the semester, quite early in the semester, online. So, for us, the notion of the reactive chalkface has got a couple of things. One, yes, that immediate move of people to shift mode happened, without a doubt. People shifted from doing a face-to-face delivery to Zoom. They went quite easily to putting more of their discussions on Canvas, which is our learning management system, versus having them in the classroom, and that happened relatively smoothly. Students knew about it, they understood, because they themselves were locked down.

The reactive bit was how rapidly people were willing to change assessment in the midst of all of this. So, because we shifted in the middle of a semester, we had to change every one of our units' assessments. Exams went from being face-to-face to online, how do you do - and, I know these are archaic and idiosyncratic assessment methods which I have fundamental problems with, but they are existent in my university - how do you do participation marks, and how do you give a participation mark when you've got 150 students on a Zoom call, that it's very hard to work out who's talking where they're using nom de plumes, they're not using their real names. And, we also had to then shift presentations and all of the more practical, authentic forms of assessment. And we ended up with just a hell of a lot of exams. Not great for the students, not particularly good for authentic assessment experience, but relatively easy to deploy in an online situation.

But that had to change mid-semester, so, I felt that was quite reactive, there wasn't a lot of thought put to that and, if us as having some expertise and scholarly thinking around higher education were to actually reflect on that as a hypothetical situation, we would be aghast at having to do that, but, I think some of the senses of reactivity weren't necessarily from colleagues, they were from us! We had to sort of turn over some of the behaviours and practices that we were used to, we had to not get caught up, and this was a particular issue in some of the educational technology circles, we had to not, as a sector, get caught up in the triumphalism of *'this is our time.'* You know, we've been sitting there telling everyone, they should focus on their teaching and learning, they should start to embrace technology, and we have been resisted and held against that desire, and now is our time, and that was never going to be a way in which we should have reacted, but there were parts of the sector that did, and I am glad that my institution didn't, and, we took a much more pragmatic approach that we're there to help.

One of the centres that I lead, which is the business co-design team, basically, put aside their major project and they just worked tirelessly at elbow with thousands of academics over the course of that 13-week semester, doing nothing else but reassuring them that, yes, sometimes Zoom does go down, and reassuring them that, yes, students are going to have some problems with proctored exams. So, I do think the similarity comes from there is a sense of reactivity in assessment, but I do think that sense of our own reactivity is something that's probably worth exploring as we work our way, hopefully, to a post-Covid world.

**Claire Gordon:** Yeah, that's really interesting Peter, the sort of reactivity of our own teams to this situation, how we've responded, and maybe we can come back to that in a minute. But first of all, I'd

like to perhaps start with Peter this time, and ask you, it's over a year now since you've been grappling with the Covid crisis in Australia and I just wondered, what have you learned? What do you think is the best way to shape the chalkface? What's worked well? And where have you actually been able to begin to effect some cultural change in your institution, or is it too early to say?

**Peter Bryant:** For us, I think the thing that we've debated the most, and it's not necessarily universal across the institution, where, obviously, one faculty have a multi-faculty institution, and it's very different if you're in medicine, or in science, or engineering, but in our faculty, the main thing we've tried to learn from this is: do we want to go back to where we were in 2019 and treat 2020, and now what looks clearly like 2021, to be an aberration? And that those were like our Covid years, and we just go back to where we were, or is there something that has come out of this, that we think is actually transformative of education?

So, the two things that we that we've had real, I think, movement on, have been a project that we started about two years ago called Connected Learning at Scale, and we are, as a business school, as most business schools are, we deliver at scale. Our classes are huge, our main core unit classes are around 15-1700 students, and normal staff-student ratio in those classes can top 30:1. Just simply, by the necessity, we can't get enough teachers. So, we have to go for bigger classes, and that scale generates its problems. One of the things that this has done for us in the last year is, it has accelerated people's exposure to some of the ways in which we were facilitating connected learning at scale, and probably the best example of that has been the pre-recorded lecture. We have been, and me personally, and along with the leadership of the school, have been railing against the efficacy of just the straight lecture. It has its place, it has its advantages, but it is not the easiest form of delivery to do, and not everybody is an expert or good at it. So, and it's actually really easy to be bad at it, so, moving away from the lecture, moving towards chunked lectures, moving towards, as Mary pointed out, that 10-minute piece, which is brilliant. And wouldn't it be fantastic given instead of me giving an example, I got someone from industry to give that example, because they're on Zoom too, and it's pretty easy for me just to pre-record them at whatever time suits, and we build this very narrative-driven block? So instead of an hour of a person standing at a lectern, it's an hour of 10 different chunks of different voices, then you throw in the interactivity capability, where, instead of saying to the students, 'you have to watch all of this hour', 'look at Path A or Path B; which path do you want to go down, do you want to watch that case or that case,' and then have that interactivity built in there. That, I think, is truly transformative. If we've learned something from the pandemic, it's that we don't have to just blast information; that we can actually create an environment with which students engage in that. And the surveys we've done of the students, the one thing they have really enjoyed out of this - they've hated the isolation, they've hated the lack of human contact, they've hated not being on campus - but they have loved the way the lectures have been transformed into something that is actually interesting and engaging. So, I hope if anything's come out of it, I reckon it's that.

**Claire Gordon:** Thanks Peter. So, Mary, what do you think has been the best way to shape the chalkface? What do you think that the Sheridan Centre has effectively pushed, and might have legacies for the future?

**Mary Wright:** As I mentioned earlier, online teaching was a very new thing for Brown University, and I think, by any predictions, people thought it was really going to be terrible, and we're not seeing that. We're not seeing that in both the faculty experience and, indeed, if you look and compare our course feedback from students from Fall19 to Fall20, every single item is higher for the Fall20 feedback. So, given that, I don't see us turning back, going back to normal, but I do think we're

entering a new normal, which is, because I'm a sociologist, I think about the idea of norms embedded in that, as changing expectations and patterns of behaviour. And I do think we're seeing some of that, again circling back to the comments I was noting earlier. I also think the idea of normal has an old definition too, about normal schools, which were places for preparing teachers, and I do think it's helped us, at the Sheridan Centre, think about our educational development approaches as well. We found, for example, that faculty also like online modules that are asynchronous that they can access 24/7. That wasn't something that we did a lot before. Our graduate teaching instructor orientation has now fully moved from an in-person model, and we're just going to keep offering an online graduate teaching instructor orientation because we've got gotten such positive feedback from that. So those are things that I think are going well. We also fully realised our vision of engaging faculty as peer educators in educational development over the summer. I hadn't known that faculty would feel like they had the time to do that at a research university, but they did, and it works splendidly. And they were such an important part of the success, in terms of helping to manage not only pedagogical change, but the emotional nature of that change with their colleagues. So those are things that I think are going well. There are some things I think we're still figuring out too, and I can mention those, but I'll stop there.

**Claire Gordon:** Okay, thank you. Maybe just to close the circle, I'll say a little bit about the context at LSE. So, I think that, where we have seen change, which I hope will be sustained into the future, is also in the area of lecturing. But I think we've just expanded the notion of lecturing, and I think we'll find that there will be colleagues who are very keen to get back into the into the classroom to deliver their lectures. I think others have seen the efficacy of chunking their lectures up and giving a series of short segments, and then, keeping that lecture space open for more interactive Q and As, discussions with their students; and a third version, has been the pre-recorded lecture online. So I think we've kind of opened up some vistas of opportunity for our colleagues, who were very wedded to quite formalistic models of teaching and learning, and I think that, you know, we've repeatedly had conversations with our colleagues across the university at different points in time saying, if you'd said to me, six months ago, if you'd said to me, four months ago, if you'd said to me 10 months ago, we would be teaching our entire university offering online to 12,000 students, and we would be just about okay with it, we would have said, 'you were mad.' And we've succeeded in doing that and the colleagues I think have surprised themselves, as well as each other.

Another area is that I think that we've kind of done some work in moving our virtual learning environment, Moodle, moving a little bit further away from being just that repository of stuff, of knowledge, of lecture notes, of course descriptions, into being seen as a key space for active learning for our students. And we know from our own surveys that we conducted last summer, that Moodle became the most important interface for our students in the university, so, like a learning site for information in terms of what was going on. So, we've really encouraged our faculty, and we provided, we've worked with PhD students, and they've been paid to work with faculty, partner with faculty on the enhancement of their Moodle sites.

Like Mary, the Eden Centre has also moved online. We're running our Postgraduate Certificate for Higher Education, which is a qualification for early-career faculty, completely online this year. We've run our programme, our inductions for heads of department, graduate teaching assistants, and new academics, completely online. And we see the benefits in terms of, people can attend flexibly, people can dip in and out, but we also do miss those sort of community-building moments. And I think the hardest nut to crack in this online environment, are those moments for authentic, social, community-building among staff, among students, among staff and students. And, finally, I think it is really important to note that it's not about transformation, it's not about shaping the chalkface, but

it's about the fact that students have been really appreciative of all the effort that has gone in. They know this is a really hard period of time, they're facing all sorts of challenge and struggle in the environments in which they're living, or taking on extra caring responsibilities, or facing other obstacles in their lives. But they can see that the efforts that faculty have been making to support them and enable their teaching and learning, and so I hope some of that sort of more collaborative relationships between staff and students will continue, although right now, in the UK, there's a big debate going on about fee rebates, so that might slightly sully the waters of collaboration.

Nonetheless, I think, you know, there are some really big positives that have come out of this crisis, those, sort of, windows of opportunity and I'm also interested, Mary, in seeing how those new norms become embedded, will they become embedded, and I think that the fact that we've started to plan now for 2021-22 with a continued online delivery, perhaps, in part (we don't know yet, we'll have to see what the conditions allow) is making people feel rather weary at the thought of continuity.

So, before we close, I wonder if I could ask one final question have you all, which is, have there been areas of tension, of where your academic development teams, your learning technology teams, have felt they've experienced a tension which what they would see as good practice education has come into tension with policy decisions the university has had to take. And maybe I can give you a couple of examples, one where a decision was taken and one where we won the battle with collaboration from students and other colleagues across the university. So very briefly, early on in our, what the LSE called, its Curriculum Shift 2020, we were keen to discourage hybrid teaching, sometimes that's called HyFlex, where you have students face-to-face on campus in the same class or seminar as students who might be online. And we were very concerned about the ability to deliver to both sets of students, a high-quality, inclusive learning experience. And then, we had many more students than we anticipated, and workload constraints meant that many, many more people across the university had to move to this hybrid model of teaching. And perhaps, not surprisingly, apart from in some very high-tech spaces, it has been experienced with great difficulty by both staff and students. So, that's one example, the sort of move to hybrid teaching which we tried to discourage, and then circumstances overtook us. And the other area where we had, what I see personally as a bit of a victory, was in the area of online proctoring. Understandably, with online assessments, particularly in certain disciplines, there are concerns about academic integrity and the maintenance of academic standards. But my colleagues and I at the Eden Centre were pretty convinced that online proctoring was not the answer, and so we were able, for a number of reasons, we were able to join other colleagues, both inside the Eden Centre, working with our students in partnership and also colleagues across the university, to suggest that this was not a route down which LSE should be going at this time. Of course, there's lots of detail to that, but I won't go into that now.

Peter, maybe we can start with you, I mean I know you're in a more of a leadership role, but maybe there are areas where you've experienced some of those, what I would like to think of are politicised dimensions, political, politics, that sometimes come into the mix, when we think about academic development work.

**Peter Bryant:** So, I'll counter the HyFlex one. I've been actually encouraging hybrid models partially, because it should, if done well, trigger a design change. So, if you design for that kind of, what I've been calling, space agnostic delivery, so that it doesn't matter whether it's online or face-to-face, the design of the delivery works, for either group of students, and that you are able to create an environment where online students can interact with face-to-face students, work together, work collectively, which is actually quite a good transferable soft skill for people working in in business,

particularly now businesses've worked out you don't need to fly people around the world to have meetings, that you can actually run them all, like this. If it's designed well, then it actually is a really valuable tool. Where I've lost that battle, is a lot of people have struggled with how much work it takes to design it, and to that degree I guess that's the battle I lost, is that we are running primarily remote and campus classes separately. We've got scale, which allows us to do it in the main, and we have got a couple of programmes that we've set as only face-to-face, because we have got a limited return to campus. We're not in the same situation both America and the UK are in, in terms of Covid cases. So, we have got a limited return to campus for people who are here in the country for this semester starting.

Probably the area that I think turned out to be most political, equally, and it's another counter to your point Claire, was proctoring. As a university, the university said that it can't deliver exams without having them the capability of proctoring. I didn't like the idea, partially because of the vendorisation of education, which I'm a particular railer against, as you might know Claire. But also, I think that, once again, changing exams represent a design challenge. So, if you take a design approach to your assessment, even if you take a design approach to exams, you're going to end up with a different exam, than it would if it was proctored. So, the victory, in that sense, is that I've got nearly three-quarters of my exams moved into very different forms of exams, open book, and designed for non-proctored environments, so they're my two.

**Claire Gordon:** Thank you, Peter. The long game is the reform of assessments, since there have had to be short-term contingencies and decisions which might not have been optimal. Mary, over to you.

**Mary Wright:** I have to say that I feel incredibly grateful to work where I do, in light of a conversation I had about two weeks ago. We had the AAC&U, the Association of American Colleges and Universities conference, and a number of my colleagues at other centres for teaching and learning were talking about how, in some cases, for example, they were forbidden not to email any faculty, or they were not brought to the table for any of these conversations. So I feel grateful, for the experience that I had, where I felt like we were brought to the table, and it was a very learner-centred decision-making process. I am probably somewhere in the middle, between you, Claire, and you, Peter, about hybrid, HyFlex teaching. About 40% of our classes were offered in hybrid format; it was incredibly challenging for instructors, and so I feel, going forward, we need to do it, but we can't do it as we've been doing it. And part of the challenge is that for face-to-face teaching, we have thousands of years of experience; for online teaching, people have been doing it basically since the beginning of the Internet; I think HyFlex teaching is so incredibly new that we don't have that body of evidence that you were referring to at the beginning, Claire, and so I'm hopeful that, with the collective minds, we can figure that piece out.

Another piece that was challenging is that, in order to de-densify students, Brown moved towards a three-term model, where, essentially, we were going all year round this academic year, and so that has been challenging given the conversations about academic stress and burnout.

**Claire Gordon:** Thank you, I mean, I have to say that we feel our voice has been more strongly heard across the university than it ever has been before, and we were thrust centre-stage at the end of March, and we suddenly had to move online so, on the whole, I feel like we've had a lot of voice; but sometimes, obviously, people at the top of the leadership do have to make pragmatic decisions, which are for better or for worse.

So I'm going to conclude, if that's all right, with a final question to you both, which is really to ask you're both in leadership positions of big, research-intensive universities, and I just wanted to ask

you, how you, yourselves, have tried to retain your scholarly, critical identity in the midst of this pandemic when, coming back to the notion of the reactive chalkface, we're having to react very quickly, and the questions and the issues keep on coming, and there sometimes doesn't seem that much space to engage in a slower, more scholarly manner. Mary, would you like to go first this time?

**Mary Wright:** Well, I feel like it's important to carve out spaces for that, Claire. So certainly, the pace of work has increased, but I've also found it helpful to take some time, I like to run, so take some time for running, or, now that winter has set in, for indoor bicycling to do that. But I'm also working on a scholarly project about the landscape of educational development for US centres for teaching and learning, and so it's very helpful to have this side, intellectually engaging project to be working on as something else to be thinking about besides academic continuity at Brown University.

**Claire Gordon:** Thank you, Mary. What about you, Peter?

**Peter Bryant:** We decided, for better for worse, in the middle of the pandemic to set up a research group that's quite a large research group of people who are primarily teaching-focused academics at the school, although not exclusively, and includes ed devs and learning techs and the like, called CoDesign, which was primarily focused on how we transform business education and student experience. And starting that up, I found really interesting because, what it's given me is a bit of an uncommon and, not a role I'm used to, which is being the person who is trying to develop around 55 or 60 researchers, many of them are early-career, and, you may not be surprised to hear this Claire, but also many of them are professional services staff who were trying to build their capability to become researchers as well. And I think, actually, having that lens has been the most important thing to keep my scholarly eye in, is how do I see that notion of research on teaching and learning through the eyes of people who are learning it for the first time. It's the teachers glare, if you will.

**Claire Gordon:** Thank you, Peter. Well, I think that we had a discussion about how do we retain our scholarly, critical identities in our academic development team just before they went to break, and it certainly was being experienced as quite a fault line in people's identities that they, and it's something that sort of I find as a sort of leader of a centre, quite difficult to manage, in the sense of colleagues were actually feeling like that their identity and credibility felt personally challenged because of the demands on their time, above and beyond, so to speak, in a normal working week. And so, it's something that, I think that, for us, in our particular identities and our institution, the pandemic has amplified perhaps. As the integration between education and research in academic development roles at the London School of Economics is still, I would say, a work in progress, personally, I agree with Mary that, it's really important to try and keep that scholarly critical work going on the side, and so I feel like Twitter has been fantastic for staying in touch, seeing links to great research articles, and blog postings. And then, you know, I feel like I've been trying to think about the pandemic when I can, at the back of my mind, in a more critical, scholarly way, and think about some of these sort of the political dynamics of the work which we're doing, and I feel it's not a neutral space that we're operating in. I've written a blog on this before, but it hasn't come to anything more, but I think that's a research project I'm keen to develop in the future. And then, with my old political science hat on, I remain interested and concerned about the whole post Brexit higher education space, and how the UK is going to stay connected, or particularly if students stay connected to broader networks of mobility and learning.

So, I'd like to, first of all, thank our colleagues, Peter and Mary. Peter has joined us very early in the morning from Australia, I'm sure he needs another coffee very soon! And Mary, in the middle of a busy workday from Rhode Island. Thank you both so much! It's been a really valuable discussion, and

I've been so interested in hearing your views and I'm really sorry we don't have more time because there's lots more questions I'd like to be asking, so thank you both very much.